

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[023] A liquid crystal optical attenuator is provided that is used to control the intensity of a light signal. The optical attenuator includes at least one polarizing element having an optical polarization axis, wherein the polarizing element transmits a portion of a light signal proportional to the angular difference between the optical polarization axis of the light signal and that of the polarizing element. The optical attenuator also comprises a variable liquid crystal rotator that includes a semi-transparent liquid crystal device, and a plurality of electrodes configured to conduct electricity to the liquid crystal device. The polarization axis of the light signal transmitted through the liquid crystal device will be rotated by an amount proportional to the magnitude of the electricity applied to the plurality of electrodes. In one embodiment, the optical attenuator is employed as part of a laser package that includes a laser, a pair of polarizing elements, and a faraday rotator.

WORKMAN NYDEGGER
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
1000 EAGLE GATE TOWER
60 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111

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